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| GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS Standard Operating Procedures | | |
| Policy Name: Peer Evaluator | | |
| Policy Number: 107.07 | Effective Date: 9/27/2019 | Page Number: 1 of 5 |
| Authority: Commissioner | Originating Division: Inmate Services Division (Risk Reduction Services) | Access Listing: Level I: All Access |

I. Introduction and Summary:

Risk Reduction Services (RRS) shall provide uniform administrative practices and guidelines to follow for the organization and management of the Peer Evaluator Program.

II. Authority:

- A Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) Board Rule: 125-2-01;
- B. GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's): 107.08, Cognitive Behavioral Programs; 107.04, Risk Needs Assessment; 107.05, Program Management, and 107.03, Staff Development; and
- C. ACA Standards: 2CO-4F-01, 4-4432, and 4-4433.

III. Definitions:

- A. **Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)** - Evidence-Based Practice employs the following principles for effective programming: assessing risk and need, designing a treatment plan that addresses offender needs, removing barriers to successful intervention (responsivity), and making appropriate and timely referrals to treatment. These principles are research-based and there is conclusive evidence that programs practicing these principles are effective in reducing recidivism.
- B. **Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)** - A structured, cognitive behavioral approach to facilitating change in behavior. MRT is a Cognitive Restructuring Program designed to promote pro-social behavior incorporating the following elements: confrontation and self-assessment, assessment of current relationships, reinforcement of positive behavior and habits, positive identity formation, enhancement of self-concept, decreasing hedonism, and developing higher stages of moral reasoning. MRT is an organized and planned program that is provided by a qualified person through education or training.
- C. **Participant** - An offender, probationer, detainee, or resident who is enrolled in one of the RRS Programs.
- D. **Peer Evaluator** - Field staff who have completed specialized Peer Evaluator training from RRS for conducting Quality Assurance Evaluations of their peers.

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- E. **Problem Solving Skills in Action (PSSIA)** - Social Cognitive Behavioral approach to facilitate change in behavior. PSSIA focuses on steps of problem solving, actively working on problem solving skills, and applying the skills. The application of these skills is through journaling, discussions, and role plays. PSSIA centers on developing and practicing skills associated with effective problem solving. The goal of the program is for offenders to leave the course with new ways to think about problems and concrete steps to use in working through problems in a pro-social way. PSSIA is an organized and planned program that is provided by a qualified person through education and training.
- F. **Quality Assurance Evaluation (QA)** - Quality Assurance Evaluation is a process whereby, at set intervals or by special request, the facilitation practices of a given Cognitive Behavioral Program are reviewed by a Social Service Program Consultant (SSPC) of RRS. QA Evaluations concentrate on program integrity to ensure the program is delivered in the way it was designed. QA also addresses classroom control, organization, and sensitivity to group dynamics, completeness of documentation, group participation, and response to participants' use of the skills.
- G. **Risk Reduction Services Programs** - Evidence-Based Programs coordinated by RRS, when operated according to established principles and standards, will reduce recidivism.
- H. **Social Service Program Consultant (SSPC)** - SSPCs employed by GDC in Risk Reduction specialize in one or more RRS Programs. The SSPCs duties include, but are not limited to, monitoring, evaluating, and training staff regarding programs at a designated GDC facility. SSPCs are trained qualified staff with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in the social or behavioral sciences or a related field. SSPCs are also responsible for implementing programs, developing lesson plans, and establishing community awareness regarding programs/services offered by GDC.
- I. **Thinking for a Change (T4C)** - Cognitive Behavioral Program that is designed to facilitate change in offender behavior. T4C focuses on the thinking skills that guide the behavior of offenders, and attempts to replace well-established, maladaptive thinking patterns with cognitive skills that can promote pro-social behavioral choices. T4C is an organized and planned program that is provided by a qualified person through education or training.

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IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Application Process:

1. Staff interested in becoming a Peer Evaluator will complete Attachment 1, Peer Evaluator Application/Agreement. The application must include a recommendation from the applicant's immediate supervisor;
2. Applications are forwarded to the RRS Counseling/Cognitive Behavioral Unit for review; and
3. Selected candidates will be scheduled for an interview with RRS staff before final approval is made.

B. Selection and Training:

1. Peer Evaluator candidates for T4C must have successfully completed a minimum of one (1) rotation of T4C. Applicants for PSSIA and MRT Peer Evaluators must have at least six (6) months continuous facilitation of PSSIA and MRT.
2. Peer Evaluators must possess, through an assessment conducted by RRS, the following characteristics:
 - a. Above-average verbal skills;
 - b. Ability to relate positively and empathetically to staff and offenders while maintaining a professional relationship that does not compromise rules and regulations;
 - c. Sensitivity to group dynamics and the ability to instruct other staff on how to stimulate groups and promote interest and high activity levels, while maintaining adequate discipline;
 - d. Ability to instruct staff on how to challenge offenders without demeaning them;
 - e. Ability to model above average interpersonal skills including:
 - i. Empathy;
 - ii. Effective problem-solving skills;

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- iii. Well-developed values;
 - iv. Rational and logical reasoning; and
 - v. Openness to new ideas.
 - f. Experience in managing groups of poorly motivated individuals who may be passively or aggressively hostile or critical;
 - g. Willingness to consider views that may not be consistent with their own; and
 - h. Must have a strong knowledge of What Works and Principles of Effective Intervention.
2. Once selected, Peer Evaluators will attend a ten (10) hour training program to learn how to effectively conduct a QA. Conducting two QAs is included in these training hours.

C. Operational Guidelines:

- 1. Peer Evaluators will only conduct QAs on programs that they have been trained in and have facilitated.
- 2. RRS staff will accompany the Peer Evaluator on their first two (2) QA assignments and will evaluate the Peer Evaluator on their ability to relate to staff being evaluated, ability to model pro-social traits, and attention to details.
- 3. RRS staff will provide feedback to the Peer Evaluator and make suggestions for corrective action, if needed.
- 4. RRS staff will contact the Peer Evaluator to schedule specific sites or offices for QA. The Peer Evaluator will have ten (10) working days from this notification to complete the QA with that site or office.
- 5. Peer Evaluators will be scheduled to conduct a minimum of four (4) QA Evaluations per year. Travel requirements will be taken into consideration when making these assignments.
- 6. The Peer Evaluator will complete a QA Evaluation report, using the appropriate Competency Evaluation Form (Attachments 2-4), specific to the program

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reviewed, within five (5) working days of completing the QA visit. The QA forms are confidential and will be forwarded only to the facilitator, the facilitator’s supervisor, and members of the RRS Cognitive Behavioral Unit.

- 7. Peer Evaluators will not conduct QAs at their own work site.
- 8. RRS staff may remove staff from the role of Peer Evaluator if it is determined that the individual is consistently not meeting the above standards.

V. Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Peer Evaluator Application/Agreement to QA
- Attachment 2: Moral Reconciliation Therapy Competency Evaluation Form
- Attachment 3: Thinking for a Change Competency Evaluation Form
- Attachment 4: Problem Solving Skills in Action Evaluation Form

VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:

Upon completion, all competency evaluation forms should be kept on file, for review by RRS, for one (1) year.